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BRIEF STRICTURES *on CERTAIN OBSERVATIONS  
of LORD MONBODDO respecting the GREEK TENSES.*  
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M. R. I. A.*

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### P R E F A T O R Y R E M A R K S.

1. IN philological disquisitions nothing is more difficult than to express our meaning so precisely as to avoid all danger of being mistaken. It becomes necessary, therefore, to premise and specify the sense which, in the following essay, is annexed to certain terms often vaguely used.

2. AORISTS, or indefinites, are sometimes so called because they are used for many tenses indifferently, pasts, presents, and futures. Sometimes, because they do not mark any precise point of time when an action happened, but only express that it did happen. Sometimes, because the verb when used in these tenses doth not express whether the action signified be perfected or im-

( B )

perfect.

Read Feb.  
13, 1790.

perfect. In this last sense only is the word applied in the following treatise, as by definite is meant the tense in which the verb expresses the perfection of the action. The reason of adopting these definitions will appear in the sequel.

3. It will be observed that I say, “ do not *express* perfection or imperfection,” for it may be implied and yet the tense be indefinite. Thus Mr. Harris, in his *Hermes*, truly calls *I wrote*, and *I write*, indefinites; although the man who wrote has written, that is, the action is perfected; and the man who writes is writing, that is, the action is imperfect: but the perfection and imperfection, though it may be implied, not being expressed, not being brought into view (to do which the auxiliary verb is necessary), nor intended to be so, such tenses are properly called indefinites. They may be called, if we please, verbal indefinites; but it is of these we speak; and if they be not indefinites, there can be no other in the sense which, as it has been observed, is applied to the word in this treatise, and I think in common use, and by most philological writers.

4. To illustrate this definition still further by example. When Dr. Louth says, that *I do*, and *I did*, often express the present imperfect and preterimperfect, I must beg leave, with great deference, to differ from him. They are indefinite. “ He loves ‘not plays, as thou *do<sup>n</sup>t*, Anthony,’ does not directly bring under our consideration or view Anthony’s continuing, or not continuing to love plays (though it may by implication), but merely his love for them, the affection merely, without calling our attention to

to its perfection or imperfection. *I do love, thou dost love,* are exactly synonymous to *I love, thou lovest* \*.

5. It must also be premised that in the two last tenses, of the three mentioned in the second section, the word indefinite will sometimes have directly contrary effects; if it marks not the perfection or imperfection of the action, it will oftentimes refer to a precise point of time, and the converse. When I say, *I wrote a letter*, I must have been speaking of some particular time when I did so; but when I say, *I have written to him often* †, I only express that I have written at some times antecedent to the present, but *at what times* does not appear. Thus the tenses usually called definites frequently refer to the past time indefinitely.

( B 2 )

The

\* Suppose the question, *do you ride the same horse you used to do?* and observe how very different the meaning of the answer, *I do ride him*, is from that of the answer, *I am riding him*.

† Note, *I wrote to him often*, is not intelligible without referring to some precise point of time, e. g. *when I was in France*. Why then does Dr. Beattie, in his late excellent work, (the Elements of Moral Science) say, *I wrote*, is indefinite, because it refers to no particular part of past time? No, it is indefinite because the verb in that tense does not define whether the action be completed or imperfect. And why does he say, *I have written*, is definite, in respect of time? for it refers to no particular time at which the event happened. Put this further Example. A. says to B. "I wish you would write to that man." B. answers, "I have written to him." The sense is complete. The expression is not supposed to refer to any particular time, and does not necessarily elicit any further query. But if B. answers, *I wrote to him*, he is of course supposed to have in his mind a reference to some particular time, and it naturally calls upon A. to ask *when*. Is it not clear then that, *I wrote*, refers to some particular time, and cannot have been called *indefinite*, as Dr. Beattie supposes it is, from its not doing so? Take another example. "I have gone to plays," does not relate to any particular period. "I went to plays," must mean at some precise time, e. g. *last winter, or when I was in France*. The author of the article *Tense*, in the Encyclopedie, had some ideas of this kind, when he insists that the *preterit absolu* of the French has all the characters of an indefinite.

The author therefore of the article Aorist in the Nouvelle Encyclopédie should not have laughed so unmercifully at Mr. Demandre for giving the name of *definites* to tenses which marked the past time *indefinitely*; “an odd reason,” says the article, “and Mr. ‘Demandre should have understood himself before he began to ‘write.” Mr. Demandre’s ideas were probably clearer than the critic’s; but he leaves room for the criticism, by referring the word *definite* to time. If he had, with me, intended the word to mark the perfection or completion of action, the seeming contradiction would have vanished.

6. To illustrate this still further, *I write*, in one way of using the word, may be a definite, to wit, “I am a writer or author;” this is definite, for it expresses imperfection, to wit, “that I continue to be so;” but it immediately ceases to refer to any precise point of time, though it does to the present epocha in general. On the other hand, *I write*, the indefinite, meaning the mechanical act of writing, applies to this present individual moment, without expressing extended time.

7. So in other examples given by Dr. Beattie, of what he calls present indefinites, (and what I would call present definites). “God is good,” “two and two are four.” These propositions must ever continue to be true. The time of the existence of these truths never can be perfectly past; therefore they do not refer to any particular time or part of time.

8. In the meaning which I have assigned to indefinites Mr. Harris agrees with me, though in a different mode of expression.

By

By an indefinite tense he means a non-extended time; by a definite, an extended time. Now the verb, expressing the action, when used in its extended time or tense, expresses the perfection or imperfection of that action. When used in a non-extended time or tense, it expresses neither. I distinguish the tenses by this attribute or consequence: He by their intrinsic nature; It comes to the same thing. But we both differ from Dr. Beattie, who means by *indefinites*, tenses which do not refer to any particular time; by *definites* those which do. Consequently he calls, *I write*, a definite, whereas Mr. Harris calls it, with me, an indefinite. For the same reason, according to his system, I think he ought to have called *I wrote*, a definite, at least in many instances; because very often, to be intelligible, it must refer to a particular time, as appears from the preceding note. *I have written to him*, is intelligible, without referring to any precise past time, because all it means to express, is *before the present time*, but *I wrote* is not intelligible unless so referred: And therefore I cannot agree to his application of the word, which refers it to a particular part of time, because, as it appears to me, it would sometimes make the tenses usually called aorists, to be called definites. For example, in the Greek language, the second aorist generally refers to a particular time, and therefore, in propriety of speech, should change its name, and be called a definite: And besides, the same tenses might be definite or indefinite according to the words or sentences that followed them; all which, though it would make no material difference in mental reasoning, would occasion confusion, by deviating from the common use of words.

9. From the preceding Remarks it will by this time appear, why I have adopted the definitions of the words definite and indefinite, which are last mentioned in the second section; and why those names are by me referred to time through the medium of action, rather than to time immediately: because the latter method makes the same tenses definite or indefinite, according to accident; the former keeps them invariably distinct. The latter, if consistently followed, must occasion deviation from common use in naming the tenses: The former will produce a conformity to it. It will, however, appear hereafter, that the application of the word to time immediately, does not affect the following theory \*.

10. If it be objected that many verbs do not express *action*, let the word *event* be substituted in the following pages, as it may without affecting the argument; e. g. perfect, or imperfect event, and the objection is answered.

\* Vide note at the end of this essay.

## B R I E F S T R I C T U R E S, &amp;c.

THE three great objects in the acquisition of languages are the knowledge of grammar, of words and their signification, and of idiom or phrase. Without accurate grammatical knowledge the two last will form a very imperfect linguist; and in the province of grammar the doctrine of tenses or times is evidently one of the most important. For how is the meaning of the author or speaker to be distinctly and definitely known, without knowing precisely the time of which he speaks, and to which the action is referred? Such enquiries, therefore, though less respected than formerly, perhaps because rendered less necessary by the immense labours of the two last centuries, have a certain utility, and have within the present age obtained the attention, and employed the industry, of three celebrated philosophers, and most ingenious investigators of universal grammar, Dr. Clark, Mr. Harris, and Lord Monboddo. Mr. Harris has given us the most philosophic and universal division of time, from whence he argues that there are in nature twelve tenses or times.

## Three Indefinites.

Past.	Present.	Future.
I wrote.	I write.	I shall write.

## Three past Definites.

Inceptive.	Imperfect.	Perfect.
I was beginning to write.	I was writing.	I had written.

'Threes

## Three present Definites.

Inceptive.	Imperfect.	Perfect.
I am going to write.	I am writing.	I have written.

## Three future Definites.

Inceptive.	Imperfect.	Perfect.
I shall be beginning, or going to write.	I shall be writing.	I shall have written.

THIS philosophic division, as Lord Monboddo truly observes, has never taken place in any language with which we are acquainted; but it seems universally acknowledged that the Greek in this, as well as in many other respects, may challenge a preference to most if not all languages that have ever been formed. In the Greek active and middle voices there are eight tenses, and in the passive nine, which, if you strike off Mr. Harris's inceptive tenses, whose utility I do not well see\*, comes very near to his philosophic number, nor do they much differ from his universal tenses in signification. This merit, however, of the Greek language, Lord Monboddo has endeavoured, though without avowing such intention, to depreciate, by boldly striking off two of these tenses, and by roundly asserting, and calling to his aid, the assertions of some ancient grammarians, that the second future and the second aorist mean nothing different from the first

\* Take Mr. Harris's example. "I do not well see how they can be called tenses of the verb *to write*; they are tenses of the verb *to go*, or *to begin*, joined with the infinitive *to write*. I do not clearly apprehend how one compound tense can be made out of two verbs, unless one of them be a mere auxiliary. *Scripturus ero* may be a tense; but will it be said that *Σηστος γαρ ιμελλει*, Lib. 2d, Iliad, line 39, is a tense of any verb? If it be, of what verb? It may be a tense of philosophic grammar, but not of the grammar of any particular language."

first tenses of the same name, and are only old obsolete presents and preterimperfects, preserved after the verb was modernised, merely to vary and enrich the sound of the language +.

It may well be doubted whether varying sounds without varying the sense can ever be an improvement of language; but no man will deny, that if those various words have distinct meanings, not only the variety of sounds will remain the same, but the language will be more definite, accurate, and perfect; and the various turns and actions of the mind or body will be more clearly and certainly expressed. To try whether the Greek language may not be rescued from this imputation, for such it may be considered, of having distinct sounds without diversity of meaning, is the object of the present essay, which is not so much proposed in the light of a system as of an enquiry.

In pursuing this enquiry, it must be premised that we are not to expect to meet with any rule that can be adopted with respect to the meaning of the Greek tenses, to which numerous exceptions will not occur.

In truth the Greek writers use them all in common practice so promiscuously, that it seems hard to say to what philosophic time they have not applied every tense of grammarians

( C )

upon

+ If that was the case, it would have been incumbent on Lord Monboddo to have shewn how they came to be used for futures and aorists, and not, as they naturally would, for other expressions of the new present and preterimperfect.

upon some occasion or other\*. But that does not prevent an enquiry, whether they were not meant originally to express distinct and specific times, and whether they are not more frequently used according to those original meanings than to any other.

To begin with the aorists. That the aorists are often used without discrimination as mere past indefinites, cannot be denied; but this is true also of the preterimperfect, and of the preterpluperfect. They are frequently used as past indefinites, but no man would venture to say, that the two last are therefore not distinct tenses, having proper and original meanings of a definite nature, as I think has also the first aorist. The question is not what takes place in practice. This may arise from abuse, from negligence; for we may be sure that the best Greek writers, as well as the best English, are sometimes negligent; or from the necessity which the poets felt of accommodating the length and

size

\* Προσδεχεθε, used as a future. *Aeschines* cont. *Ctes*, sec. 8th. *Μετεγγωσαν*, *ιγενότο*, used as preterpluperfects. *Dem. de corona*, sec. 50. In the 11th book of Homer, line 296, *Ιείσκειν*, used as an indefinite, though a preterpluperfect. Every one knows that aorists are often used as presents and futures. These instances, out of ten thousand, happen at this moment to occur to me; but they teem in every page of every Greek author; nor is it possible to miss them. It appears to me, however, and it may well afford matter for surprise, that the more ancient authors, and particularly Homer, are more nice and discriminating in the use of the tenses than the more modern; and that Dr. Clark could not have found any book that would have supported his analogy of the tenses nearly so well as his and the world's favourite author. Languages certainly advance gradually to perfection; but perhaps in simpler times there is, if I may be allowed the expression, less luxury and wantonness in the use of language as of every thing else; or perhaps the uses of life do not require such various applications of it.

size of words to the metre and rhythm. But the question is, whether the aorists are not in strict propriety distinct, as to signification, and were not meant originally to be so, and even whether one of them may not have significations incomunicable to the other.

I THINK then it cannot escape our observation that the first aorist has much more frequently a definite meaning than the second. The second appears to me, in nine instances out of ten, to be used indefinitely. *He went, he rose, he spoke,* and all similar phrases, are usually expressed in Greek in the second aorist, *ιεν, άνεση, έφη.* There is no difficulty in finding instances to the contrary; as in Tenth book of Homer, line 556, Nestor, speaking of the horses of Rhesus, says, I have never seen, nor have I observed them before, *επω ιδον εδέ ένόησα.* So Æschines cont. Ctes, saying that even the man who had received no public money should yet render an account, viz. that he had not received, and therefore not expended, makes him say, *οὐτ' έλαζον, οὐτ' ανηλωσα\**. In these passages *'Idon*

C 2

and

\* And yet perhaps, without too much refinement, these might be translated, one definitely, the other indefinitely, at least in words if not in sense. I neither *saw*, nor *have I observed*. I neither *received*, nor *have I expended*, [Vide sec. 3, prefatory remarks.] Such distinctions are arbitrary, and therefore perhaps not generally noticed, yet they are not useless, nor without beauty. Dr. Gregory, in a treatise on moods, in the last Edinburgh transactions, takes notice of this very contrast, and observes "that there is a precision and beauty in this use of the simple, contrasted with "the compound past tense, (e. g. the Lord *gave* and the Lord *hath taken away*) not to "be attained in Latin, which would say Dominus dedit, and Dominus abstulit; but "attainable in Greek, by using the aorist for *gave*, and the preterperfect for *hath "taken away."*" No, not according to my idea; but by using the second aorist for *gave*, and the first for *hath taken away*. The contrast of the second aorists beating such possible construction appears in every book and every line; but Dr. Gregory has given no example of the contrast he mentions, as I remember. Perhaps, after all, the

and ἐλατον appear to have a definite signification, but such instances are comparatively few. The first aorist, on the contrary, is most frequently used as a past definite; and indeed so frequently, that grammarians observe it is oftner introduced to denote the past perfect time than their preterperfect tense itself. Have we not reason then to suppose that its proper meaning is of a definite nature, and that it is not *properly* an aorist? Sanctius seems to have been of this opinion when he calls the second only by the name of aorist. And if it can be shewn that such a tense was actually wanting in the Greek language, to express the time of an action which is past and perfect, will not the truth of the position be strongly confirmed? In shewing this, in fact it will require more pains to distinguish the first aorist from the preterperfect than from the second.

HAVING then distinguished the first from the second aorist, by arguing that the first is not *properly* an aorist, and that where they seem to be used in the same sense, either such a contrast as Dr. Gregory alludes to is intended, or it arises from necessity in defective verbs; I proceed to shew that such a definite, as I conceive the first aorist to be, was wanting in the Greek language, and is not supplied by the preterperfect.

THE tenses of vulgar and philosophic Grammar frequently differ, or, in other words, the times which common grammarians  
sup-

the only instances in which the Greeks ever use the second aorists thus, without apparent distinction from the first, are where they are the second aorists of defective verbs, which have no first aorists, at least in common use

supposed to be denoted by the written tenses of a language, and according to which they therefore denominated those tenses, are not the real times they were intended to express. Thus Dr. Clark has proved, in the Greek language, that the tense usually called by them the preter or past perfect, does not properly express such a time, but a different one, which ought to stamp it with a different name\*; that the time it was intended to express is complex, including the consideration both of the past and of the present; and implying, that the action has been done, and still continues to be done. *Αρφεληκας*; thou hast protected, and dost still protect. *Τεθαυμακας*; thou hast admired, and dost still admire. This opinion is confirmed by the authorities of many other of the most able linguists, particularly Lord Monbocco and Mr. Huntingford.

This then being in strictness of speech the true signification of the preter tense, usually, though improperly, called the preterperfect, it is plain that we must seek in the Greek language some other tense, to express the time of the performance of an action which was perfected at a time past, and has ceased to continue; whose conclusion was antecedent

to

\* The appellation he gives it is the present perfect. In this appellation I must beg permission not to concur with him, because whatever is perfected must be past. Non meus hic sermo. Scaliger had heard the name, which did not originate with Clark, and laughed at it for the same reason, for whatever action or passion is still continuing must be imperfect. Some name is wanting to express this compound of the past and present.

to the present time, and which bears no other relation to the present, and whose time therefore is the real preterperfect. Accordingly Dr. Clark has assigned to this office the tense usually called the preterpluperfect; but surely without authority, for that tense expresses something more. The tense we want is only to denote that the action was past and perfected at a time antecedent to the present. But the preterpluperfect is always used to signify that the action was past and perfected at a time antecedent also to a past time, i. e. antecedent to some given period or epocha past, to which we look back. *He had done it, fecerat*, must mean that he had done it before some certain time or event past, of which we have been speaking, and is something very different from saying, *he HAS done it*. Grammarians were therefore in this instance right in calling it the preterpluperfect, as implying something more than the mere past perfect. This tense then not answering our purpose, it seems to me that we must have recourse to the first aorist, and that the original intention of the first aorist was to express the real preterperfect time of philosophic grammar.

To confirm this by examples would be an endless task; the only method of proof that can be adopted, is that of referring the reader to the general use of this tense when it is not an indefinite. When it is used as a past definite it can have but two meanings; either that of an action entirely past, or of an action which commenced at a time past, and is still continuing. The latter meaning has been appropriated by the writers abovementioned to the preteritum perfectum. It follows then of course  
that

that the former belongs to the first aorist. Exceptions \* to the general rule cannot be allowed to subvert it, for if so the multitude of exceptions † to Dr. Clark's and his followers established interpretation of the preterperfect must overthrow his system. The one seems equally strong with the other.

HAVE I explained my argument clearly? it is, that a peculiar signification having been proved in the preterperfect, vulgarly so called, viz. that of a *continuing* action, and there being a philosophic time belonging to an action quite past, and not now continued, there ought in vulgar grammar to be a tense expressing such a time, and in Greek no tense can be found applicable to it but the first aorist, which undoubtedly often expresses a past definite of some kind or other, and therefore, without any force or violence, naturally falls into that place. When it expresses a past definite, it must mean either an action quite past, or partly past, but still continuing. In the latter meaning it would be confounded with the preterperfect, from which danger Dr. Clark has rescued it for me. It remains therefore clear that the former must be its meaning ‡

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\* In the two first words of Xenophon's Memorables, is an exception, ΗΟΛΛΑΚΙΣ Ἡσίμαχος, where the surprise of Xenophon certainly had not ceased. But such exceptions are few.

† That such exceptions are numerous may easily be seen, by casting the eye over the first twenty pages of Demosthenes de Corona, where the preterperfect tense is very frequently used, not in Dr. Clark's sense.

‡ It will be said here that I have been employed in distinguishing the first aorist from the preterperfect, and not from the second; and it will be asked, how does it appear

THE argument is still further confirmed by Lord Monboddo's extension of Dr. Clark's theory of the preterperfect.

IN the total inefficacy of the preterperfect of grammarians to express the real past perfect time, Lord Monboddo agrees with me, though not in the mode of remedying it. He draws a still more accurate line about the preterperfect than Dr. Clark, and endeavours to shew that in every instance that tense is compound, and relates to the present time. The apparent exceptions to Dr. Clark's idea of its expressing a continuing action, he removes, by insisting that in those cases it is made use of because the effects and consequences are continued to the present time; and that whenever it is used, we shall find, either that the action or its effects are continued to the present time. ' There are actions,' says he, ' which end in energy, and produce no work that remains after them. What shall we say of such actions? cannot we say, we have danced a dance, taken a walk, &c. and how can such actions be said in any sense to be present? My answer is, that the consequences of such actions, respecting the speaker or some other person or thing, are present, and what these consequences are, appear from the tenor of the discourse; I have taken a walk, and am *much the better for it*. I have danced one dance, and am *inclined to dance no more*. So in Demosthenes's oration against Aristocrates, whom he accuses of transgressing a decree, when he considers the transgression of the decree

appear that the second also may not express this past and perfect action? The answer is, that we set out with shewing that it failed in expressing the *perfection* of the action. The preterperfect does not express that it is *totally past*. The second aorist does not express that it is *perfected*. The first aorist alone expresses both.

- decree as present by its effects and consequences, he uses the preterperfect, *παραβεβηκε*, he has transgressed. If he considers the transgression simply as past, he uses the aorist *παρεβη*.

HAVING thus confined the meaning of the preterperfect to a compound sense, which always has a connection with the present, Lord Monboddo naturally proceeds to supply tenses for the past, i. e. for that past which has no connection with the present. This purpose he considers as answered by the aorists, used indefinitely, and without distinction—e. g. *he spoke, he said*. But he forgets that these tenses, in the meaning by him assigned to them, signify only the past indefinite, and that he has not pointed out to us any tense, which may express the past perfect. Either therefore he must assert that there is no past perfect in nature, unconnected with the present, (which would contradict his previous division of the past into perfect, imperfect, and indefinite) or he must allow that he has omitted to shew any correspondent tense in the Grecian grammar. Indefinites only express that the action is past, but say nothing about its perfection; whereas we want a tense to express both that it is past and perfect.

BUT to prove further, that indefinites will not suffice, as Lord Monboddo seems to suppose they will, to denote that *past* which excludes the present, we must observe that the speaking of an action

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\* If these expressions offend, viz. of tenses or times expressing the perfection or imperfection of action, let it be remarked that they are only used for the sake of brevity, and that the reader is always supposed to substitute my original definitions of definite and indefinite tenses, viz. those in which *the verb expresses* the perfection or imperfection of action; or we may with Dr. Beattie speak of the tenses as perfected or imperfect *with respect to action*.

merely as past, i. e. indefinitely, does not exclude the present: it may be in part past, yet still continuing and we may be speaking of that portion which is past. *He spoke well*, does not imply that he may not be speaking still: It may only mean that he spoke well during that part of the speech which the relator happened to hear. But when we say, *he has been a good speaker*, we exclude the present, and evidently express that he is no longer so. How would indefinites answer this purpose? Lord Monboddo himself takes notice of this distinction in Latin. “The Latins, says he,” “have a mode of ‘sometimes using their preterperfect, in a sense which positively ‘excludes the idea of the present time.’”

“ Fuit Ilium, Fuimus Troes.”

VIRGIL.

“ Vivite felices, memores & vivite nostri,  
“ Sive erimus, seu nos fata fuisse volent.”

TIBULLUS.

He observes at the same time that the Latin language was probably derived from the Greek before the Greek had arrived at its greatest improvements, and before it had been enriched by a greater variety of tenses, and therefore has no aorists.

If this be true, do not his observations make it probable, that after the separation of the Latin language, the Greeks had furnished theirs with the first aorist, for the very purpose of expressing, by a separate tense, this exclusion of the present time, as they furnished it with the second aorist to express the mere pure indefinite?

BUT

BUT allowing Lord Monboddo's extension of Dr. Clark's theory to be too refined, as many have supposed it to be, and that the exceptions to Dr. Clark's explication of the preterperfect are as numerous as they seem to be, and that it often means an action entirely past and discontinued, even in its consequences; give me leave to hazard a conjecture, that even in this case it is distinguishable from the first aorist, and that this tense has still a peculiar meaning of its own. "The difference between the preter-  
 " perfect, and the aorists," says Mr. Huntingford, "is that which we  
 " understand when we say, I have written γεγραφα, and I wrote  
 " εγραψα. It is so when this aorist is used indefinitely, and in such  
 " case the distinction equally applies to the second. But we are  
 " now speaking of cases where it is used definitely, where they  
 " both signify, *I have written*, and in such case some grammarians,  
 " as is observed in the Port Royal Grammar, have conceived the  
 " difference to be, that the first aorist denotes a time *very lately past*,  
 " the preterperfect, *one long since*." It is with much deference that  
 I propose an opinion directly opposite. Let us see, by a few ex-  
 amples out of many which have occurred to me, whether there be  
 not some ground for this opinion, having first stated clearly what  
 the opinion is\*

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\* The author of the article *Tense*, in the Encyclopedie, observes that such distinctions are possible, and therefore ought to be noticed in treating of universal grammar, though he does not know whether they ever have taken place in the grammar of any particular language. I think they have in French as well as Greek, in their *preterit absolu* and *preterit indefini*. Pere Harduin says such distinctions are arbitrary. Be it so; their existence is not thereby disproved. The distinction above-mentioned between the aorists, (viz. that of the contrast observed by Dr. Gregory between the simple and compound past,) is certainly arbitrary, depending on expression in words, not on the nature of things; yet, though we can from thence account for the distinction having escaped general notice, we are not thereby authorised to deny its existence.

In the Latin and English languages we have no diversity of tenses, or of single words, to express whether a past action has been done lately, or a long time since. It is only from the tone of the speaker, from the circumstances of the event, or from the context, that we can find out the difference. I *have* done it, *feci*, does not tell us whether it was done this instant, or in the commencement of the speaker's life, fifty years ago. But if the agent enters in haste and perturbation, and says, I have *done* it; from his looks and accents, and the circumstances of the time, we collect that he has done it the instant before: it is the present perfect. If, on the other hand, he says, I *have done such things in my youth*, we know that there is a considerable interval between the doing of them and the present æra. In the passive, the difference is manifested in words, *it is done*, *it has been done*, but not so in the active. To supply this defect, which the English and Latin languages labour under, in their *active* voice, in not distinguishing, by different sounds or words, the difference between what was lately perfected and what some time ago, and in the *passive*, in not making this distinction but by the help of the auxiliary verbs, the Greeks seem to me to have invented their first aorist, and to have intended by it to indicate the latter, as the preterperfect did the former.

THE opinion of Theodorus Gaza, as quoted by Lord Monboddo, with respect to the meaning of the preterperfect, in some measure coincides with this theory, which is also strengthened by the observation made in the essay upon the origin of languages, that the preterperfect was called *παρακειμένος*, as being a time near to the present. But without relying upon this argument, I shall proceed

proceed to produce some examples tending to shew how far this supposition corresponds with experience.

WHEN Archimede rushes out of the bath, after making his celebrated discovery, he cries out *ἐνημάτω*, because he had just at that moment found out and solved the difficulty. But when Nestor speaks of ancient days and ancient heroes with whom he had been conversant, he speaks in the aorist, *ἀρείστω ἤπειρος ὑμῖν Ανδραστιν ᾠμίλησα*. 1 Lib. Homer, line 260 and 261.

WHEN Demosthenes supposes the question *τεθνήκε Φιλιππός*; it follows plainly that if the fact had been so, and any person had come in suddenly to announce it, he would have said *τεθνύε*. But when Chryses, in the first Iliad, line 40, alludes to actions by him formerly and frequently performed, he uses the aorist, *if I have ever crowned your altars or burnt victims, ἐρέψα and ἐκηγα*.

When Æschines concludes his oration, with calling Heaven to witness as to his own efforts in the progress of it, he uses the preterperfect, because those efforts had just then been made, *βεβοήγηκα καὶ ἐφηκα*. So Demosthenes, in multiplied allusions to the calumnies just before thrown out against him by Æschines, uses the preterperfect, *βεβλασφημήκε περι ἐμώ*. Nor perhaps is it an objection that Demosthenes, in the same oration, speaking to the Athenians of his own life and administration (much of which had long since elapsed), says *βεβιώκα* and *πεπολιτευμώ*; because as he was *still* continuing to live among them, and *still* to administer their public affairs, he spoke of matters not entirely past.

So Demosthenes, in the 36th section of the same oration for the crown, says,

Στεφανωσάντων

Στεφανωσάντων τοίνυν ὑμῶν ἐμὲ ἐπὶ τεῖλοις τότε, καὶ γράψαντος Αριστονίκου τας αὐτας συλλαβας ἃς περ οὐτοις Κτησιφῶν νῦν γέραφε.

THE crowns to which he alludes were given formerly, *tote*; the participle of the first aorist is used, Στεφανωσάντων; Ctesiphon's is comparatively recent, *nun*, therefore he uses the preterperfect γέραφε.

So in the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles, the Chorus, speaking of the death of *Oedipus*, which has just happened, says βεβηκεν. More examples would be tiresome; these may be sufficient to draw the attention of the reader to similar passages.

It must be acknowledged that in the very next page a contrary instance occurs. The Chorus asks again, Finiit Vitam ? ἐπραξεν ουν; and the answer is ἐπραξεν, in the aorist \*. But then it must be remarked, that the preterperfect active of the verb πραττω is rarely used; which circumstance, or some defect in the verb, may possibly account for this and other instances, of recurring to the aorist, instead of the proper tense, the preterperfect †. Or if this method of accounting for them should not be admitted, I must still contend that we are to be governed by the great tide of practice and majority of authorities, and are not to yield

\* See another memorable instance against me (unless the first aorists there are to be construed as presents) in 3d book Iliad, line 367 and 368. We must meet them fairly.

† The same reasons sometimes occasion a recurrence even to the second aorist, (viz. where not only the preterperfect, but the first aorist also, are wanting, or seldom used) in order to express an event which has just happened, e. g. ον. 5th Book of Homer's Iliad, line 127; but if these exceptions to my system seldom or never occur but in defective verbs, it is not thereby impeached.

yield immediately to some contrary instances, which may be owing to inattention or poetic license ; and I must again recall the reader's attention to this truth, that if such weight be given to contrary instances, neither the interpretation given by Dr. Clark, and all the eminent Greek scholars of this century, of the preterperfect, nor indeed any system calculated to reduce the Greek tenses to some certain and clear analogy, can be maintained. Nothing is more common than a primogenial and a vulgar use of words, of tenses, moods, &c. It is the case, as Dr. Clark has shewn, with respect to the preterperfect. It is the case with respect to the middle voice ; its primogenial use, as is universally acknowledged, is to mark a reflected action, like a reflex verb ; yet how often is it used without any such possible meaning ? Why may not, in the same manner, a primogenial signification and use be granted to the first aorist, though contrary instances occur ? The weight and number of instances is to determine \*.

THE probability that the Greek language might entertain a distinct tense to denote what had lately or what had long since happened, is augmented by our knowledge that they had a tense to express what was soon to come. The nation that used a *paulo post future* might have a *paulo antepreterit*. Some circumstances respecting the French language may tend also to illustrate  
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\* In assuming this criterion I am supported by Casaubon, Vossius, and Henry Stephens. Notwithstanding numberless opposite instances, they advanced an opinion that the first aorist denoted a time less remote than the preterperfect did ; this being an opinion directly contrary to mine, I might be thought guilty of great presumption, if Henry Stephens, from whom the opinion originated, had not latterly expressed great doubts of its truth.

and to confirm the conjecture. They have two preterperfects, one of which is in fact an aorist. All their grammarians say that this last is never used if the time be not entirely past; for instance, "il a été heureux cette semaine, ce mois ci, cette année." "He was happy this week, this month, this year;" not "il *fut* heureux," though that expression would be applied to the happiness of the last week, "il *fut* heureux la semaine passée." So they observe it never is used to express an action done the day we speak in, but one done always at some small distance of time; for instance, they do not say, to express the happiness of this morning, "Je fus heureux ce matin," but "J'ai ete heureux ce matin." "The speaker would not say, "I eat a chicken this morning," but "I have eaten," "J'ai mangé un poulet ce matin." This is mentioned only to shew that distinctions of this nature are not chimerical, but do exist in languages.

BUT whether this conjecture be well-founded or not, if the former positions be admitted, as I think they must, that the second aorist is rarely used definitely; that the first is so frequently used in that sense, of a past definite, as to occur oftner than the preterperfect itself; and that this last tense having assigned to it a specific and appropriate meaning, there naturally remains for the first aorist a proper and peculiar signification belonging to it in strictness of speech, though not always so applied in common use; I say, if these positions be admitted, there will remain a considerable distinction between the two aorists.

THERE is still, I apprehend, another perceptible distinction in the use of these tenses. If an action be spoken of which has been often done, I think it is observable that the Greeks generally use the first

first aorist. Thus, in the beginning of the Cyropædia, where Xenophon reflects how many democracies have been \* reduced, and how many oligarchies subverted, cases frequent in human affairs, he uses the first aorist; so in the beginning of the Memorables, Xenophon expresses his frequent surprise at the errors respecting Socrates, *I have often wondered*, in the first aorist; so in the example above-mentioned, Nestor, wishing to express that he often conversed with men much superior to those of the present day, says ἀμαλητα; so in similes where the comparison is made with something frequently occurring, the first aorist is generally used. E. g. the simile used by Demosthenes, de Cor. sec. 57. “as if we ‡ should blame the mariner who has prepared, &c. &c.” is expressed throughout in this tense. We may observe that in these and similar cases, we speak of no particular time at which the action happened, but only of an action which has often past, without determining any precise time. The second aorist, therefore, which generally refers to a particular time, is, I believe, seldom if ever used to denote a frequentative; although Lord Monboddo has assigned this office to it, as well as to the first,

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\* Ενοια τῳ ήμεν ἐγένετο, ὃσαι δημοκρατίαι καὶ εἰδύθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀλλως τῷ βελοφέντῳ πολιτεύεσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ, ὃσαι τ' αἱ μοναρχίαι, ὃσαι τε ὁλιγαρχίαι ἀνήρησαν<sup>a</sup> ἡδὲ ὑπὸ δῆμων. καὶ ὅσαι τυραννεῖς ἐπιχειρήσασθε, οἱ μὲν αὐτῶν καὶ ταχὺ πάριπταν καὶ εἰδύθησαν.

<sup>a</sup> Here a preterperfect is introduced among the first aorists, perhaps on account of the vicinity of the word ἡδὲ, which brings the view to the present time, signifying Jam, abhinc—before the present day.

‡ Οὐστερ ἄν εἴ τις ναύκλησε τάντ' ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ πρόσκαλα, καὶ τῶς παλασκενάσαται τὸ πλοιον, ἀφ ὧν ὑπελάμβανε σωθῆσθαι, εἴτα χειμῶν χρησάμενον, καὶ πονησάντων αὐτῷ τὸν σκευῶν, ἣ πατεργοβέβηλαν ἔλως, τῆς ναυαγίας αἰτιώτε.

from which latter alone, however, he draws his examples. In like manner the French express cumulatives by one of their preterperfects only, viz. the compound; (the other, as I conceive, corresponds with the second aorist of the Greek,) and say, " J'ai " parlé de vous trente fois en ma vie."

It is easy to produce apparent examples to oppose this theory. E. g. \* in the simile in the third book of Homer, line 23, it will be said the aorists are used indifferently, in an instance similar to those mentioned above. I deny it; *ἐχαρη* is not used there as a past tense at all; it is used for the present, as this aorist frequently is, and the line ought to be translated thus :

" As a lion *rejoices* who *has* fallen upon a large prey."

If it be doubted, take Virgil's translation :

" Impastus stabula alta leo ceu fæpe peragrans  
 " *Confexit* capream, aut surgentem in cornua cervum,  
 " *Gaudet hians immane——*"

*Aeneid.* 10. 723.

In the same manner, in the famous simile at the end of the 8th book of Homer, 'Ως δ' ὅτ' ἐν ωρανῷ αἰσχρα, various tenses are used in describing a beautiful night-piece, such as has been often beheld; but they are all used for the present tense, and Dr. Clark translates them accordingly. My position only is, that when on such

\* Ὡς λέων ἵχαρη μεγάλη ἐπὶ Γόμαλι κίρος.

such occasions a *past*, but indefinite time, is to be expressed, the first aorist is generally used\*.

THE distinction that I mean to impress (I repeat it again) is this, that the second aorist is the only proper indefinite; that when it is introduced as a definite†, it errs from its primogenial use; that it is even doubtful whether it ever be a definite, at least verbally‡ or expressly, though it may by implication—That, on the contrary, the primogenial use of the first aorist is to express a past definite, and of a peculiar nature, viz. an action totally past, and not now continued, wherein it differs from the preterperfect; that the second aorist, even when it is used definitely, if it ever be so, only shews that the *action* was perfected at a time past, without determining the time when it was done, whether a long or a short time since; whereas the first aorist, when used in its strict

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\* If definite and indefinite therefore be referred to time, the first aorist is indefinite, the second definite. If to action (in which manner it has been applied through this treatise) the converse takes place.—*Vide Prefatory Remarks, Section 5.*

† Quere, whether it ever is properly a definite, for I scarcely remember an instance where it may not be construed indefinitely; for instance, where *ἴδω* and *ἴαθω* are construed, *I have seen*, and *I have taken*, it would be as easy to translate them, *I saw*, and *I took*. But this is not the case with the first aorist, which it is very often impossible to translate indefinitely; for instance, how could Nestor's expression above-mentioned, *ἐπίνοε*, be construed, but, *I have been conversant*, or *I was conversant*, among superior men. Contrue it, *I conversed*, and observe how the passage will sound.

‡ By a verbal definite I mean that where the perfection or imperfection of the action is actually expressed, by means of the auxiliary verbs *to have* or *to be*. Perhaps this note, as well as many preceding it, are unnecessary; but the abstract nature of the subject must apologise for possibly too much anxiety to be explicit.

and proper signification, implies that it was done a considerable time since, and the preterperfect, when used with the same strictness, implies it was done very lately, or even continues to be done yet; that the second aorist is probably never used definitely, but from necessity, viz. in defective verbs, which have no first aorist; that the first aorist is also used as a cumulative or word of multitude, to express an action which has been often done, and in other senses (which will occur to the attentive reader) seldom or never communicated to the second aorist; that whenever these two aorists seem to be used indifferently as past definites, there is a beautiful contrast intended, analogous to that which Dr. Gregory observes in our language, and which he might have observed in the French, between the simple and compound preterperfect; and that this is evident, because the first aorist often cannot be construed but by the help of the auxiliary verb, as in the instance of *ωμίλησα*, (1 Iliad, line 260.) while the second always can be construed without any such aid; and that all these circumstances together make a wide discrimination between these two tenses, which Lord Monboddo conceived to have no difference of meaning.

LET us proceed now very briefly to consider the two future tenses of the Greek language, on which a very few observations will suffice.

DR. Clark distinguishes between the two futures, by calling the first the imperfect, and the second the perfect, which are thus by him enunciated, *cōnabo*, I shall be supping; *cōnavero*, I shall have

have supped \*. Lord Monboddo, though he does not perfectly accede to his translation of the first future, which he says is an indefinite, does so to that of the second, and thereby allows there is a distinction in Latin, but denies it in Greek. "The Greeks," says he, "have no one word to express the future perfect or "imperfect; their second future does not do it; both futures are "merely indefinite; if they wanted to say, *I shall write*, they could "express it by one word, the future of γραφω; but if they wished "to say, *I shall be writing*, they must use a circumlocution γραφων "ἐστομαι, and if they wished to say, *I shall have written*, they must "say γεγραφως ἐστομαι. I challenge (says he) any person to shew that "canabo ever means, *I shall be supping*, in any author." I shall not dispute with him about his meaning of the first future, though I do not accede to it; let it be indefinite or imperfect, *I shall sup*, or *I shall be supping*: if the second future be a perfect, and a definite, and signifies, *I shall have supped*, or *I shall have written*, the distinction will be sufficient †. But before I endeavour to shew that it does, let me take notice of the position that the future, definite, that is, the perfection or imperfection of the future, cannot be expressed by one word without circumlocution. Now the fact is that the future perfect is very frequently

\* *Tunc*, I shall be beating. *Tum*, I shall have beat.

† To make good his challenge, Lord Monboddo should have defied us to shew that the second future ever has the last-mentioned signification; and if I shew that it has, the futures are thereby distinguished, and his triumph over Dr. Clark is incomplete.

quently indeed expressed by one word, in the infinitive mood; for instance, the prayer of Agamemnon, in the second book of Homer \*, line 412.

Ζεῦ κύδισε, μέγιστη, πελασφέτης, αἰθέρι ναίων,  
Μή τοῖν ἔπ' ἡμέραιν δύναται, καὶ επὶ κνέφας ἐλθειν,  
Πρίν με κατὰ τῷρην βαλέειν Πριάμοιο μέλαθρον  
Αἰθαλόεν, τῷρησαι δὲ πυρὸς δηῆσιο θύρελραι.  
Ἐκτόρεον δὲ χιτῶνα τερὶ σύθεσοι δαΐζει,  
Χαλκῷ ὁμολέον· τολέεις δ' αὐτῷ αὐτὸν ἐταῖροι  
Πρηνεες ἐν κονίησι οὐδαέ λαχοίσθε γαῖαν †.

In the five last lines of which passage, all the verbs, which are single words, signify the future perfect, and are so translated by Dr. Clark. In truth, there is no difficulty in finding instances, except in the indicative mood; and really one would imagine that it was that mood only that Lord Monboddo took into view. Now it must be considered that the future perfect of the indicative, *I shall have stricken*, *I shall have supped*, can scarcely offer itself to use but in dialogue or in oration. And this may be the reason why it is seldom observed in that

\* Let not the sun set, before that *I shall have levelled* to the ground the flaming palace of Priam, &c. &c. Ne prius sol occidat quam dejecero, &c. &c. says Dr. Clark.

† See other instances in the Iliad of Homer, 17th book, line 32; 3d book, line 55; 2d book, line 355; 23d book, line 45, and in book 22, line 509, a first future is used in this perfect sense. Demosthenes does use the expression, *γεγραφως ισομαι*, but not of necessity.

that sense, because, though it may occur in common conversation, it can seldom be met with in the perpetuum Carmen, or perpetua Historia; and when it does occur in dramatic writers it is expressed in various ways; e. g. by the participle and genitive case, *ἐς τοσουτού ἐλπίδων ἐμε βεβατος*, cum eo spei pervenero, OEdip. Tyrann. line 781; but scarcely ever by that circumlocution which Lord Monboddo describes. But the future perfect that most generally occurs, is that which is preceded by and depends upon some adverb or conjunction, e. g. WHEN *he shall have done it*, AFTER *he shall have done it*, and therefore throws itself into the subjunctive mood; and in that mood there is no difficulty in finding instances in abundance of the second future being used as a future perfect; e. g. \* WHEN *you shall have come to the end of life*, *χωταν εἰς τέλος τις ζην αφικη*, the verb is the second future conjunctive mood. Sophoc. OEdip. Colon. line 1526. So Jupiter, in the first book of the Iliad, says to Juno, *οτε κεν τοι απῆγε χειρας ἐφειω*, which I apprehend is to be translated, *when I shall have laid my irresistible hands on you*. Ηνπερ γαρ πολεμον γε φυγη, 22. Iliad, line 486. *φυγη*, translated by Clark, and I think truly, *effugerit*,

\* If it be said there is no second future in the subjunctive mood, that seems to me to be only quibbling, for the second future and the second aorist being the same in that mood, I have as good a right to call it by one name as the other; or if it be insisted that it is the second aorist used for a future, the reasoning will be the same, since whenever it is so used it is to all intents and purposes a future, and whatever is applicable to future is then applicable to it. I am not ignorant that Mr. Dawes, in his *Miscellanea Critica*, has totally denied the existence of the second future in any mood whatsoever, of the active and middle voices of the Greek language. With respect to the subjunctive mood, I hope the preceding observation is an answer. With respect to the indicative, I proceed upon the common hypothesis of grammarians, and especially of those whose opinions I have undertaken to examine.

*effugerit*, not *effugiat*. The following is an instance of a future sense expressed in a single word even in the indicative,  $\pi\alpha\theta\omega\nu \dot{\epsilon}\gamma\nu\omega\varsigma$   $\alpha\nu \delta\alpha\pi\pi\epsilon\varphi\alpha\nu\epsilon\varsigma$ . Passus cognovisses, ea quæ agis. *OEdip. Tyr.* line 411.

THESE instances may suffice to lead the reader to attend to others; they may be found in abundance. Thus much in defence of Doctor Clark's explanation of the second future. Nor can I acquiesce implicitly in Lord Monboddo's translating the first always indefinitely. When Antigone says, in the *OEdipus Coloneus*, *whether exiled in foreign lands or wandering over the seas*,  $\delta\upsilon\sigma\omega\sigma\omega\nu \dot{\epsilon}\zeta\omega\mu\epsilon\nu \tau\rho\phi\pi\nu$ , I do not see why we have not as good a right to translate it with Dr. Clark, *we shall be leading a miserable life*, which is the future imperfect, as with Lord Monboddo, *we shall lead*, which is indefinite. The former, though it may sound inelegantly, appears to me the true translation.

HAVING thus submitted the few observations which occurred to me on these tenses, let me not be suspected of entertaining the least inclination to detract from the reputation of Lord Monboddo, as a profound and accurate linguist. I agree with Mr. Huntingford in thinking that his work on the Origin of Language, is a work of the greatest penetration, erudition, and taste; and the Greek scholar is particularly indebted to him for the chapters relative to the Greek language; but I trust we may be indulged, without offence, in thinking that his sentence on the aorists and futures was hasty and unfounded; and if a favourite hypothesis should have misled its author,  
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and shut his eyes to invincible contrary examples, some hints may possibly be offered by this discussion to the minds of others, which may tend to elucidate and ascertain the analogy of the Greek tenses. To fix their meaning accurately must be undoubtedly considered as an object of much moment, while the knowledge of the true sense and meaning of the Greek authors is held in estimation by the world ; and that it ever must be so, is evident from the consideration that the New Testament itself is written in that language, in the interpretation of which the application of a tense may be of considerable importance. It is hoped, therefore, that any endeavour to elucidate the subject will meet with indulgence ; and if it be allowed that the preterperfect applies to an action commenced at a time past, but still present in itself or in its consequences ; the second aorist in its primogenial use to the time past only and indefinitely, *i. e.* without expressing the perfection or imperfection of the action ; and the first aorist to the time past, exclusively of the present, and denoting the perfection of that past action (as the preterimperfect does its imperfection), every difficulty is removed, the parts all harmonise, and the meaning of the other tenses being already agreed upon and acknowledged, every one will have its own proper and peculiar primogenial signification.

N. B. If the foregoing application of the word *indefinite* to action, and not to time, should seem to any one unnatural, let it be applied to time, and then I say the preterperfect and first aorist are *definites*, because they respectively define and mark the time of the event to have been *lately*, or *long since* past. The second aorist is indefinite, because it does not mark, define, or indicate, whether the time of the event has lapsed *lately*, or *long ago*, but leaves it totally uncertain. This mode of referring them to time, though not the one usually received, is the only one which can consistently justify us in applying these names, according to common use.

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